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NEW COLD WAR: REBUILDING PAKISTAN RUSSIA RELATIONS

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Abstract

This paper explores Pakistan and Russia building relations at the backdrop of New Cold War in the South Asia. It argues and justifies that competing and rival groups in the present international system are forcing states to build new alliances. Hence, Pakistan's new collaborative strategy of allying itself with Russia is due to several political and economic developments amongst its immediate neighbors in the region. While Russia, a former super power is trying to revive its role in the region is also looking for new partners with converging interests to deal with its security issues at home. Both states can benefit from the new partnership if they properly use their strength and capabilities in the region. The article also argues that how certain changes are forcing both Pakistan and Russia to revisit their foreign policies, thus indicating a beginning of the "New Cold War" in the South Asia.

Key Words: South Asia, New Alliances, Foreign Policies and New Cold War

Introduction

There are no eternal friends or foes in international relations. States interests' converge and diverge depending on the world order and the prevailing situation. Once upon a time, building better bilateral relations with Russia was a challenge for Pakistan, however today's global realities and compulsions have forced Russia to get closer to its old foe. In addition, certain political developments are indicating towards building a New Cold

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world is all about politics and economic development.[41] It is also understandable that Pakistan is passing through an evolutionary phase and struggling with its economy due to several reasons. However, persistent security threat and political instability has adversely affected its economy and made the state dependent on the International Monetary Fund and other donor agencies. Unfortunately, since Pakistan's inception, governments are depending more on the foreign assistance (of one block) and are not paying attention to create conducive environment for the partnership investments to sustain its economy by utilization of available resources. Therefore, in such grim conditions, the only sustainable solution available is to revive our economy with the assistance of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and to start looking for more partners that can assist us.[42]

Pakistan with CPEC has strengthened its relationship with China and has extended the courtesy to Russia too. It is a well-known fact that Russia and China are strategic partners and are part of BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.[43] Russia supported Pakistan's bid to become a part of Shanghai Cooperation as well. The notion of "Sino-Russian Belt and Union" with the Eurasian states (One Belt One Road and Eurasia) has floated amongst the regional powers and if materialized, it will change the power dynamics in the region and will benefit Pakistan. It is important to highlight that Russia is also interested in assisting Pakistan in exploring Thar Coal and is ready to invest 2 billion dollars for the construction of North South gas pipeline.[44] There are debates and diplomacy going on regarding Russia joining the economic alliance of China and Pakistan. It would be more productive for Pakistan if bilateral alliance (CPEC) is changed into multilateral, it will not only safeguard Pakistan's economic interests but will also address some of its security concerns too.[45] In addition, it is pertinent for Pakistan to counter economic alliances detrimental for its economic health in the region through partnerships and strong lobbying.

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